



'It's just how we articulate the Blackness in us': African American teachers, Black students, and African American Language

Danielle Marie Greene

To cite this article: Danielle Marie Greene (2024) 'It's just how we articulate the Blackness in us': African American teachers, Black students, and African American Language, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 27:5, 579-598, DOI: [10.1080/13613324.2021.1969905](https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2021.1969905)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2021.1969905>



Published online: 01 Sep 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1780



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 7 View citing articles [↗](#)



'It's just how we articulate the Blackness in us': African American teachers, Black students, and African American Language

Danielle Marie Greene 

Graduate School of Education, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA, USA

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of African American Language (AAL) and *Standardized American English (*SAE) in Black/African American same-race teacher-student relationships. The teachers in this study (1) used AAL as a valuable tool for building rapport and trust with their students; (2) were aware of their positions as linguistic role models; and (3) encouraged AAL-speaking students to use *SAE due to concerns about racial and linguistic profiling. Results suggest that because AAL-speaking African American teachers understand the United States to be a racially stratified society, they encourage their students to use *SAE with intentions of helping students advance socially and economically. This study illuminates why African American teachers use their shared language proficiency with their same-race students.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 31 August 2020

Accepted 1 August 2021

KEYWORDS

African American Language; AAL; language ideologies; language attitudes; teacher-student relationships; same-race

I was trained by a university residency program that educated teachers committed to working in a predominantly low-income and Black school district.¹ We were taught that all teachers serve on the front lines of student reading, writing, and language development. Interestingly, there was little to no acknowledgement of the existence of African American Language (AAL) or its impact on teaching and learning. I noticed this absence also extended into my teaching career – the circumstances of which were unique. I taught in schools where over 50% of the teaching staffs and administrative teams were Black, despite Black teachers being only 7% of American public school teachers (Musu-Gillette et al. 2017). Many of us, like numerous other African American teachers, shared mastery of AAL alongside our students. The exclusion of and silence about AAL from professors and other in-service leaders reverberated loudly in academic spaces and throughout years of professional development.

Thankfully, my Black students were rarely silent. Their self-expression rang through the hallways louder than any school bell. But the students won't never speaking alone. We talked back. At a school filled with a majority African American teaching and administrative staff, my Black colleagues and I also slipped in, out, and in between forms and uses of AAL. Endings dropped off our words like honey from a hot spoon as we talked and testified (Smitherman 1977, Chapter 5). We told Arnella to stop touchin' Lamar phone and explained in History class how the United States had been 'bout this police brutality life. And yet, despite the sounds and tones that hugged our students in the comforts of a mutual linguistic home, we made our

students' papers bleed red for deviations from a presumed standard form and called out their use of words like 'spreaded' in front of their peers. I often wondered about this duality, even as I perpetuated it. I loved a language and the people who spoke it, but my teaching practices showed the prioritization of another.

Children constantly receive messages about language legitimacy and usage from their schools and teachers (Delpit 1988; Smitherman 2006). AAL speakers are often profiled as lacking intelligence, being unemployable, and without potential for economic success (Baugh 2002, Chapter 8; Rickford and Rickford 2000). In particular, children of African American descent are also likely speakers of AAL, especially if they also come from a working-class background (Wolfram 1969). However, many educators are not prepared by their teacher education programs to work with children who speak non-standard varieties of English (Gupta 2010). 'Bad' English, word gaps, lack of parental support, etc., are commonly believed to be causes of African American students' lack of success in traditional public schools (Baugh 2017; Johnson, Avineri, and Johnson 2017). As a result, many researchers have turned to investigating methodologies focused on assisting AAL-speaking students with mastering a *Standardized American English (*SAE) form (see, e.g. Craig et al. 2009; Labov and Baker 2015).² Academia's preoccupation with teaching *SAE suggests that it is the children who require fixing, not the systems which abuse their people and language.

Given the stigmatization of AAL, how Black teachers negotiate their own use of the language in the classroom opens insight into the benefits (or difficulties) of same-race or culturally similar teacher-student relationships (Gershenson et al. 2017; Moore 1996). After all, for decades, the National Council of Teachers of English has insisted on children's 'right to their own patterns and varieties of language' (NCTE 1974). Still, many people who aspire to help African American learners navigate White spaces find prioritizing children's acquisition of *SAE necessary. And so, teachers persist in perpetuating and elevating notions of a standardized language that arguably does not exist – I did (Delpit 1988; Lippi-Green 2012). How is this prioritization not absurd? I encouraged children to learn under circumstances where I suppressed their most natural form of expression, while I continued to use the very language I discouraged. The study of AAL in classrooms should serve as more than a gateway to *SAE. As such, an analysis of African American teachers' uses of AAL can reveal the reasons for the decisions made behind the language practices used when teaching Black children.

African American teachers' relationships with their Black students have been studied and theorized about, to include discussion of their use of AAL (Foster 1997; Ladson-Billings 2009). What scarcely exists within the literature is what motivates African American teachers' use of AAL and *SAE in the classroom and how that influences their attempts to impact their students' use of language in the classroom (see, e.g. Moore 1996). In this investigation, a focus is placed on the narratives of those who share the culture and language of their students in an effort to expand our knowledge about same-race teacher-student relationships. Neither calls for teacher education programs that redesign our understandings of language, children, and classrooms nor studies of teacher attitudes about AAL are new (see, e.g. Ball and Muhammad 2003; Blake and Cutler 2003; Camangian 2015; Denny 2012). However, when Black instructors have been included in teacher attitudinal research, it has been in conjunction with or in opposition to the attitudes of White teachers (see, e.g. Champion, Cobb-Roberts, and Bland-Stewart 2012). This study places exclusive focus on asking African American teachers to interrogate

language use within their classrooms. *Why* do African American teachers employ or discourage the use of AAL in a space that is heavily policed by standard language ideologies? This study provides an opportunity for African American teachers to give voice to their language practices with their AAL-speaking students.

Literature review

**Standardized American English*

Silverstein (1979, 193) defined language ideologies as ‘a set of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use’. One such set of beliefs is standard language ideology. Notions of standard language undergird the impression that certain varieties have inherent prestige because of proximity to a supposed homogeneously consistent writing form (Anderson 1983; Lippi-Green 2012). Also referred to as the Language of Wider Communication (LWC) and White Mainstream English, *SAE is commonly understood to be ‘devoid of . . . socially stigmatized features’, as determined by what is spoken by ‘socially, politically, economically, and educationally powerful and privileged groups’ (Baker-Bell 2020; Smitherman 2006; Wei 2010, 398; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998, 283). Thus, what is considered *SAE is both regionally dependent and based on how close the speakers are perceived to be to elite groups. Essentially, *SAE is a social construct. As with other social constructs (i.e. race and gender), the concept of *SAE has real impacts on speakers’ lives.

Despite the variety among American English speakers, *SAE is so ingrained as a mainstream linguistic currency that the United States’ Common Core criteria dedicate K–12 standards to ensuring students can ‘demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English’ (Common Core Standards Initiative 2020). That no other variety is mentioned by national educational standards reinforces a social hierarchy wherein *SAE is positioned as most valuable. The Common Core did not create the hierarchy, but continues to promote schools’ elevation of language practices that reflect the social norms of an upper-class elite. As a result, languages spoken by marginalized communities, like AAL, are pushed to the peripheries.

Irvine and Gal (2000, Chapter 2) identify the processes by which differences in language combine to create linguistic ideologies of ‘norm’ and ‘other’. In the case of *SAE, perception is reality as speakers are understood to be using the variety, not only based upon writing conventions, but also as determined by individual listeners (Rosa and Flores 2015). In the United States, upper-middle-class Whites determine who and what constitute ‘the linguistic other’ based on their standard language ideologies. People perceived to be *SAE speakers enjoy privileges which others lack – placing premium demand on *SAE.

African American Language

According to King (2020, 287), African American Language is a descriptive term for the distinctive speech of African American communities, inclusive of ‘class, gender, and region’ – for example, ‘dialects like Gullah and AA(V)E (African American [Vernacular] English)’. At times described by academics as a variety of English, the origins of AAL are heavily debated (see, e.g. Kifano and Smith 2005; McWhorter 1997). Nevertheless, AAL is

a legitimate, grammatical, and practical form of communication spoken by a majority of African Americans as well as other individuals raised in close proximity to African American communities (Labov 1972, Chapter 5; Rickford and Rickford 2000). A non-monolithic language variety, AAL also consists of internal variants from regional variability to ranges in ‘standardness’ (Hoover 1978).

Coined ‘anti-Black linguistic racism’ by Baker-Bell (2020), scholars have highlighted how language ideologies in the United States are entrenched in White supremacy and negatively impact non-White speakers through linguistic oppression (Hooks 1994; Sledd 1969; Smitherman 1979). To use the words of Michael Eric Dyson, ‘every conversation about Black speech is a conversation about Black intelligence and ultimately Black humanity’ (1, as cited in Baker-Bell 2020). AAL exists on the margins of American language because of anti-Blackness and the lack of privilege its speakers hold. James Baldwin (1979) referred to this phenomenon when he stated: ‘It is not the black child’s language that is in question, it is not his language that is despised: It is his experience’.

In the tradition of raciolinguistic perspectives, I note that many linguistic beliefs and ideologies surrounding the speech of Americans were co-naturalized alongside ideologies of race (Charity Hudley 2016). Raciolinguistics demands researchers consider how language and race have co-naturalized in order to unearth insights ‘regarding the ways that particular populations and cultural practices come to be imagined in relation to American pasts, presents, and futures’ (Alim, Rickford, and Ball 2016; Rosa 2016, 107). As primary targets of White supremacy, the historic brutalization of African Americans in the United States is connected to how Black speakers are judged to lack the linguistic skills to communicate (Smitherman 1979). Classist and racist beliefs feeding conceptions of standard language have long contributed to negative perceptions of AAL. Systemic discrimination resulting from those attitudes cultivated ongoing social practices, like linguistic profiling, which disadvantage AAL speakers (Baugh 2002, Chapter 8).

As seen in the Oakland Ebonics scandal, the public (irrespective of race) expects teachers to transfer their knowledge of *SAE to their students (Ball and Lardner 1997; Denny 2012; Mordaunt 2011). In part, scholarship has leaned on internalized anti-Blackness as an answer for why some African Americans show preference for *SAE over AAL in schools (see, e.g. Baker-Bell 2020). Indeed, Rahman (2008) found that among middle-class African Americans, notions of high levels of standardness in speech were more aligned with perceptions of Whiteness and higher social class. However, to add to the robustness and complexity of this issue, I also lean on conclusions drawn by Hoover (1978) that assert African Americans’ desire for their children to acquire *SAE is not strictly based on self-hate or desires to assimilate to Whiteness. Instead, Hoover determined that many African American parents of lower socioeconomic status recognized *SAE as a function of a hyper-stratified society – with many expecting schools to help children avoid linguistic discrimination when pursuing jobs and socioeconomic elevation. Educational attainment is often believed to be a pathway toward increased socioeconomic mobility, so standard language ideologies bear heavy weight on teachers of low-income children who do not speak only *SAE.

While research focused on perceptions of teachers abounds, little explicitly seeks to understand the perspectives of teachers who share their students’ proficiency in AAL. Given the estimation that 80–90% of all African Americans speak some variety of AAL and professional testing requirements require a high level of competency using *SAE, specifically engaging African American teachers’ perceptions of AAL is overdue (Rickford 2006).

Methods

This section details how I conducted this study, including participant selection, data collection, and analysis.

Setting and participants

Participants

The seven interviewed African American teachers included two elementary school teachers, three middle school teachers, and two high school teachers. Three identified as men, four as women, and six of the seven were former or present recipients of their schools' Teacher of the Year award. All teachers maintained fluency in AAL, as determined by previous personal interactions, and were employed by the same school district, Cambridge Public Schools (CPS).³ Located in the southeastern mid-size city of Cambridge, CPS serves over 20,000 students across its roughly 40 urban school sites annually. Demographically, 75% of enrolled students are Black/African American and 80+% of students receive reduced and/or free lunch.

Participant descriptions

Chris Harrison: Mr. Harrison has been teaching for eight years as an 8th grade civics teacher and coach. He has never taught anywhere else. Raised just outside of Cambridge in the surrounding suburb of Riesling County, Mr. Harrison attended an in-state predominantly White institution (PWI) before receiving his teaching credentials via a local Historically Black College/University (HBCU). The recent recipient of a highly prestigious national teaching award and previous Teacher of the Year, Mr. Harrison says he began teaching because he felt that more Black men should be represented in classrooms.

Deavin Pearson: Ms. Pearson has taught 9th and 10th grade world history during all four years of her career. Raised in the city of Cambridge, Ms. Pearson attended CPS schools until she left to receive her undergraduate degree and play Division I basketball at an in-state PWI. She later earned two master's degrees from another local PWI before beginning her teaching career. Despite earning offers from multiple school districts, including several specialty magnet high schools, Ms. Pearson reported feeling compelled to teach at her Title I high school 'because they need good teachers, too'.

Denay Martin: Mrs. Martin is a 7th grade U.S. history teacher and department chair. She has taught at the same school, in the same classroom, for 12 years. Raised hours southeast of Cambridge in the majority-Black locale of Hightown City, Mrs. Martin first came to Cambridge to pursue her undergraduate degree in history and finance at a local HBCU. She later returned to receive her teaching credentials. A career switcher from banking and former Teacher of the Year, she began as a substitute teacher after realizing that she was passionate about mentoring pregnant teenage girls at her church.

Edith Brown: Ms. Brown is an 11th and 12th grade U.S. history/government teacher. Raised in Cambridge City, Ms. Brown spent the past six years teaching at her alma mater. Before that, she taught for six years at a rural, White, low-income high school in Forest Hill County, roughly an hour away. She has six collegiate degrees, including a Master of Divinity from an HBCU and an undergraduate degree and a law degree from two top-10

ranking PWIs. A former Teacher of the Year and career switcher from the field of law, Ms. Brown began teaching in Forest Hill County after credentialing at a PWI because the pay was better. She returned to CPS because she felt ‘it was time to come home.’

Eugene Thomas: Mr. Thomas is a 7th grade special education math teacher. He has been teaching for 22 years, from teaching incarcerated persons to his present-day classroom. Previously a death row correctional officer and teacher, Mr. Thomas has taught at four schools since joining CPS and is a recent recipient of his school’s Teacher of the Year award. Raised in a rural town in the south-central part of the state, Mr. Brown attended an HBCU for his undergraduate degree and another local HBCU to receive his teaching credentials.

Jasmine Ryan: Mrs. Ryan is a kindergarten teacher of 14 years, who during my observations taught math and English. She has never taught anywhere else. Raised hours south-east of Cambridge between Oceanview City and Hightown City, Mrs. Ryan first came to Cambridge to pursue her undergraduate degree in biology and criminal justice at a local PWI. Despite her mother’s disapproval, Mrs. Ryan switched careers to become a teacher because she felt passionate about it. A recent recipient of her school’s Teacher of the Year award, she began her teaching credentialing process at an HBCU but finished later at a PWI due to funding issues.

Winslow Jefferson: Mr. Jefferson is a fifth-grade teacher, who during my observations taught math and English at an elementary school where he has been teaching for five years. Aside from five months at a local middle school, he has never taught anywhere else. Raised in another southeastern state, Mr. Jefferson initially heard of CPS as a result of pursuing his undergraduate degree at an HBCU located an hour east of Cambridge. A recent recipient of his school’s Teacher of the Year award, Mr. Jefferson has aspirations to one day open his own school dedicated to serving the needs of low-income Black children.

Below [Table 1](#) provides a summary of participant information:

Data collection

I collected memos of participant observations, audio recordings, and semi-structured interviews during the 2018–19 school year. Between October and November 2018, I conducted and audio-recorded three one-hour in-class observations of each teacher

Table 1. Participant information summary.

Name	Years Teaching	Grade	Subject ^a	% Black Students ^b	% Black Colleagues ^c	Teacher of the Year Awardee
Mr. Harrison	8	8th	Social Studies	72%	55%	Yes
Ms. Pearson	4	9th	Social Studies	100%	75–80%	Nominee
Mrs. Martin	12	7th	Social Studies	68%	30%	Yes
Ms. Brown	12	11th	Social Studies	100%	75–80%	Yes
Mr. Thomas	22	7th	SE Math ^d	78%	70–80%	Yes
Mrs. Ryan	14	K	Math, Reading	65%	46%	Yes
Mr. Jefferson	5	5th	Math, English	94%	60%	Yes

^aAs my results show, teachers of all subject areas, not just those teaching language arts, think deeply about language and its in-use context.

^bThe percentage of Black students in the specific classes I observed.

^cThe percentage of Black teachers in each teacher’s school.

^dSpecial Education, Math.

to gather data reflecting the ways the teachers utilized and responded to AAL. From 21 hours of recordings, I retrieved samples of instances of the teachers' use of AAL and dissected them into 15–30-second audio segments.⁴ These audio segments were transcribed and used in participant retrospective semi-structured interviews with each teacher (Martínez 2013; Rampton 2003). Participant retrospection was employed via presenting teachers with audio segments of their classroom language. With minimal prompting, the teachers were invited to explain or comment on their language practices in the recordings.

Each teacher participated in an interview lasting roughly 30–60 minutes. The interviews consisted of two parts: (1) personal history inquiries relative to teaching; and (2) exploration of language use in the classroom. Further probing allowed the teachers to drive the narrative of the interview, offering room for thoughtful, self-directed explanations. The transcription of those interviews alongside descriptive observational memos encompassed the data for this study.

Data analysis

I used conventional content analysis to analyze interview data, thereby making the substance and significance of the teachers' words a priority – focusing on *what* a speaker says, rather than *how* it is said (Hsieh and Shannon 2005).⁵ Three rounds of coding were employed (see Table 2). The thematic coding technique known as *in vivo* provided an accessible way to allow teachers' words to speak for them. I developed the codes by directly pulling from the words of each of the teachers, allowing those interviewed to create the initial categories of analysis. In addition to *in vivo* coding, splitter coding was used to allow the data to be divided into 'smaller codable moments' (Saldaña 2015, 23). This means the *in vivo* codes were synthesized across commonalities and renamed to describe what was encompassed by the now multiple labels. The renamed codes were the new splitter codes. The final round of coding was a system of descriptive coding (Saldaña 2015), used to group the splitter codes together into larger bins of common ideas. Table 2 depicts the transformation of a series of codes into the larger developed descriptive code of 'in-grouping', the process by which language is used to signify belonging to a community or shared identity (Ryan 1979):

The data above were also included in other, larger descriptive codes. Ultimately, 24 final descriptor codes were analyzed, ranging from 'the other' and 'correction' to 'mesh' and 'negative associations'.⁶

Findings

I just love Black people. No, like I said earlier, I just think that it's good for Black kids to see Black teachers who care about them, who are good. —Deavin Pearson

Much was learned from the seven African American teachers who graciously opened their classrooms and were interviewed so that a deeper understanding of their linguistic ideologies and language practices, as they relate to standard language and AAL, might be gained. The audio they allowed me to collect was raw, vulnerable, and authentic – to open



Table 2. Sample coding method for 'in-grouping'.^a

Transcriptions	Round One: Splitter Coding – In Vivo Codes	Round Two: Synthesizing of In Vivo Codes	Round Three: Descriptor Codes
'To bridge that gap and to help bring that barrier down and let them know, I'm not too much different than you. I'm just older than you. I've been in your shoes ... because when a child looks at you, they're gonna get this certain perception but what comes out your mouth is what's going to either draw 'em [in] or pull 'em away ... What I try to do is, like I said, establish or nurture a relationship that I've already started with them and keep building on that on a daily basis'. – Eugene Thomas	'Bridging' 'Not Different' 'Draw 'em [in]' 'Relationship'	Bridging Not Different/ Similar Draw 'em [in]/ Relationship/ Connection Draw 'em [in]/ Relationship/ Connection Not Different/ Similar Not Different/ Similar Not Different/ Similar	In-grouping In-grouping In-grouping In-grouping
'Sometimes, I use it to get them to understand that I'm similar ... so, they see me as a human and not ... sometimes, they put us up on this high pedestal, because we're their teacher. Sometimes, I want to break it down to show them that, hey, you can do this, too. That helps us build relationships. So, I do it sometimes. It helped them understand that ... I may not be like your mom, but I can [be]'. – Jasmine Ryan	'Similar' 'Similar' 'Relationship'	Not Different/ Similar Not Different/ Similar Not Different/ Similar	In-grouping In-grouping In-grouping
'... the way that I'm able to speak to my students and connect with them really makes them want to do ... that's how I speak when I'm comfortable and I show them I'm comfortable with them, so I go into that language'. – Denay Martin	'Similar' 'Connection' 'Comfortable'	Draw 'em [in]/ Relationship/ Connection Comfort	In-grouping In-grouping

Each of the above quotes was stated in response to different probes. Although in Table 2, I only highlight how I came to the theme of 'in-grouping,' the data above were also included in other larger descriptive codes because each statement surfaced multiple strands of information.

your classroom to a friend is one thing, to open a classroom to a researcher, another. With that in mind, it must be said that every teacher featured said it was not an excitement for content or a steady paycheck that drove them to teach, but a deep and unwavering ethic of care, compassion, and love for their students, their Black students.

Black teachers loving Black children – Black people loving Black people – is at the center of the results reported below: even where possibly misguided in the enactment of this love, still a revolutionary act. I share what follows in the spirit of placing that love at the center of this study, but I am also mindful to not portray these individuals as a monolith. All of the teachers used varying levels of AAL, mostly of the Black Standard variety, in classroom observations and throughout their interviews (Hoover 1978; Rahman 2008). How the teachers encouraged their students to use language in the classroom also differed. These African American teachers both approve and disapprove of AAL in class, do and do not believe their students speak *SAE, and worry about their students' capability to negotiate life outside of their communities without the ability to use a standardized language form. But each believes AAL to be a formidable space for building rapport, trust, and relationships with their students. Table 3 maps the variation of language use and opinion among the interviewed teachers.

Even in light of this variability, as expressed in the findings section below, all of the teachers in this study 1) used AAL as a valuable tool for building rapport and trust with their students; 2) were aware of their positions as linguistic role models; and 3) encouraged AAL-speaking students to use *SAE due to concerns about racial and linguistic profiling.

Valuing AAL: rapport & linguistic role modeling

I'm a firm believer in sticking to who you are. I'm Black. Imma speak like a Black person. — Eugene Thomas

During interviews, six of the seven teachers said their students did not speak standard language or described their students' speech with deficit-based descriptions such as 'street talk' or 'broken English.' Yet, the teachers modeled affection toward AAL and described using it as a device for developing positive relationships with their students. Of the seven teachers,

Table 3. Teachers' use of and engagement with AAE and *SAE.

Name:	Thomas	Ryan	Pearson	Jefferson	Martin	Harrison	Brown
Reported always modifying students' spoken language to *SAE		✓					✓
Reported modifying students' spoken language to *SAE sometimes	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Reported never modifying students' spoken language to *SAE						✓	
Reported using *SAE all of the time		✓					✓
Reported using AAE all of the time							
Reported using AAE and *SAE in specific contexts	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Reported using AAE to connect to students	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reported viewing AAE as an asset	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reported wanting students to have command of *SAE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

100% reported seeing their students' use of AAL as an asset and stated they used AAL in the classroom as a method of gaining students' trust, building rapport, and increasing engagement in lessons. Akin to this, Ms. Brown, a teacher who reported always correcting her students' grammar, because she believes the classroom is a unique space in their lives to 'practice' using a standardized form of English, noted that when students used nonstandard language in the classroom it felt like 'home' and demonstrated 'a comfort' on their behalf. Similarly, Mr. Jefferson described using and allowing students to use AAL as a way to make his students comfortable in order to encourage their participation:

Because it helps them understand me better, and it helps me get my point across [so] that they can understand it . . . they can feel comfortable talking to me even if it's not in standard language.

Mr. Jefferson found using AAL with his classes took pressure off of students who might not otherwise speak because of fears that they needed to sound a particular way. What is interesting here is that Mr. Jefferson and Ms. Brown employed different tactics to modify students' language, yet they offer the same conclusion about AAL's connection to building or sharing comfort in the classroom. Alternative methods, same feelings.

Whereas Ms. Brown and Mr. Jefferson described knowing that use of AAL creates comfortable spaces for their students, Mr. Thomas unearthed *why* this happens:

They know I can speak our language, and when I use it with the teaching, it breaks the ice. It kinda makes it a little more fun. It gets them involved, because . . . they've been told that, 'Oh, that nigga thinks he's better than you.' No, as soon as I leave here and get in that goddamn truck outside, I become a nigga. Ask any Riesling County cop, any Hampden County cop, any Cambridge County cop. Suspenders on, tie or not. Get in that goddamn truck and turn that key on and get in that street, I'm a nigga, or 'Is he a Mexican? Lemme pull that bitch anyway.'

Mr. Thomas used AAL in the classroom as a method of demonstrating to his students that they possessed a shared in-group identity with him: race (and potential recipients of racist treatment). His description of creating 'in-group distinctions' displays how AAL helps break the ice in the teacher-student dynamic to help build rapport and familiarity (Ryan 1979). However, Mr. Thomas believes AAL does more than make him familiar to his students – the language also is well-positioned to obliterate notions of superiority on his behalf. His words highlight how he wants to assure his students that he does not believe himself to be above them. His lived racist and racialized experiences from outside of the classroom influence his decisions about teaching and language with his students, because they all face a similar world outside of school.

Mr. Harrison does the same as Mr. Thomas when evoking his own use of in-group distinctions:

'I think [using AAL] makes it more comfortable for them. Instead of just someone just talking to you and you know, "I'm better than you". I'm like "Yo, I'm one of y'all."

The teachers believe their racial identity connects them to their students and they highlight this sameness through usage of AAL. By using AAL in a space where *SAE is preferred, these African American teachers shift their language as a means of strengthening their membership within a shared group identity with their students. The following exchange illuminates this phenomenon:

Greene: [In an exchange with a student] . . . you said, ‘Wanna try me?’ Can you elaborate what you meant there?

Martin: If your behavior continues, you got to go.

Greene: Got it. Why didn’t you say it that way instead of . . . ?

Martin: ‘You wanna try me?’ Well, there’s a facial expression that also goes with that. There is some intonation that comes with that. There’s some attitude that comes with that, that you just can’t get with ‘If those behaviors continue.’ It’s more mama-esque than ‘If those behaviors continue.’

Greene: So, when you say it’s ‘more mama,’ is this a universal mother?

Martin: No. That’s a Black mama. That’s an African American mama who says, ‘You wanna try me?’

Greene: All of that was packaged into that – those few words?

Martin: Yeah. A few words. But you have to have – it’s facial. It’s body language, and it’s particular to this community. In the Black community, we have some things that are just understood – that relates to language. It’s just how we articulate our – the Blackness in us.

Here Mrs. Martin leaned into her personal knowledge of ‘things unknown’ in Black discourse to explain her choices in communicating with her students (Smitherman 1977, Chapter 5). She tapped into her own experiences of AAL and Black culture, motherhood, childhood, and life to communicate her seriousness to her students by in-grouping herself with their communities. In each interview, teachers highlighted how they used or allowed their students to use AAL to increase notions of comfort in the classroom and in-group themselves through race.

However, the form of in-grouping seen in this study is shaped by particular conditions. Teachers typically carry a higher social capital within the classroom than their students, regardless of their shared racial identity. Mr. Thomas acknowledged this distinction by following his previous comments with:

I show them that for them to know, ‘Oh, you can talk like that, but you can also be a nigga . . .’ What you have on doesn’t determine who you are. It’s what come out of your mouth . . . That’s the way I kick it with them. I use the standard language a lot of times when I’m teaching it, but Imma always put a lil’ hook in it—because all the while, I’m establishing a bond. I’m making the bond tighter and tighter and tighter, because it’s all about trust. They will not listen to you if they don’t trust you.

As their teacher, Mr. Thomas in-groups himself and establishes rapport when he uses AAL. However, he remains fully aware that he is still positioned as the teacher. So, not only is he establishing trust, he recognizes that he is a model – a linguistic model. Smitherman (2006) theorized that Black youth find ‘linguistic role models’ in other

African Americans. Just as Mr. Thomas described, Smitherman asserted that these linguistic role models simultaneously dispel notions that *SAE is only spoken by White people while ‘reaffirming the value of Black community speech’ when they continue to also utilize AAL:

For Black youth, then, the linguistic role models become African Americans themselves, which was the case for generations under legalized segregation. This gets us away from the notion that LWC is ‘talkin White’ or a variety of American English only used by White folk. At the same time, since these role models also plug into various patterns of AAL, they also reaffirm the value of Black community speech. (Smitherman 2006, 137)

All of the teachers made mention of an awareness that their Black students may see their language use as an example of the various ways Black people engage in the world around them. For African American teachers to flex AAL as a part of their linguistic toolbox is to exemplify that, even in a space like a classroom where *SAE might be preferred, students do not have to believe that their language has no place within school walls or is separate from education entirely.

Elevating *SAE: stratification & success

When I do push for standard, even though I don’t always use that, it’s because I’m like, ‘Y’all are going to go out into the real world, and they’re not going to accept this from you. It’s not gonna be okay for you to use this language.’—Denay Martin

In each interview, I asked the teachers to define ‘standard language’. None of the teachers questioned whether *SAE was real and 100% of the teachers mentioned the existence of a standardized English variety at least once. However, one teacher was troubled about the legitimacy of imposing her definition of ‘standard’ on her students:

Pearson: I don’t know that it would be deemed standard [laughs]. I mean, it’s hard to differentiate between standard and non-standard because for me, like everything – the way in which they speak, I can understand. And the way in which I speak to them, they understand. So, I think it’s our standard. Yeah, so I go back and forth between this, because I think that one should be grammatically correct. I also think that this idea of ‘grammatically correct’ can be problematic. So, I go back and forth about correcting when they speak incorrectly.

Greene: Why do you think it can be problematic?

Pearson: Because it’s kind of condescending in a way, saying that how you speak is wrong. Especially if this is how you grew up, this is what you know. And who am I to say that you should conform to this standard?

Ms. Pearson noted that her and her students’ ability to understand each other created a standard specific to her and her students. Despite believing that there are ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ ways of speaking, she still created space for this standard due to discomfort with making her students change their speech to fit a norm that suggested a devaluation

of their home communities. It is this tension that has her break from her colleagues' nearly unilateral faith in the existence of a standardized form of language and leads her to question what really should be considered standard.

Ms. Brown, like Ms. Pearson and four other teachers, emphasized that 'correcting' her students was important. She and Mrs. Ryan reported modifying their students' spoken language to match *SAE all of the time, which deviated from their peers' practice of only doing so sometimes. Yet, after listening to various recorded instances of herself not challenging the AAL spoken by her students, Ms. Brown admitted to not always modifying every 'error' because sometimes what the students said just sounded 'natural.' Mrs. Ryan gave a similar response during her interview after hearing recordings of AAL spoken by students that she did not correct. In practice, teachers' definitions of the standard and what speech required correction varied person by person, moment to moment. The teachers' willingness to be led by what sounded natural was an indication that 'our standard' was in constant development in every class and by every teacher.

Further, all seven teachers indicated that part of their motivation for their students to use *SAE stemmed from the professional requirement to have students perform well on standardized exams. Each acknowledged that the students would not receive formal summative assessments from state agencies that would allow students to utilize their full linguistic repertoires, even if they sounded natural. Even Mrs. Ryan, who teaches kindergarten, thought about the way *SAE use can lead to academic success far beyond her classroom:

I always imagine it being this White man, in admissions . . . and even when I used to work in admissions . . . the head of [admissions] was a White man . . . the majority of the head of departments were White men.

Her students are 5–6 years old, but Mrs. Ryan is thinking about how what she does in her classroom prepares her students for college admissions. She emphasizes *SAE in her classroom in an attempt to ensure that the real or fictitious White man, who 'will not support our efforts to become anything other than the clones of those who are neither our mothers nor our fathers,' is no barrier to her students' possible aspirations to attend college (Jordan 1988, 363). Even when people develop their own standard forms of language in the classroom, it appears that White notions of standard language ideologies reign supreme.

Mr. Harrison slightly veered from his peers by making a distinction between the necessity of writing, reading, and speaking *SAE:

So, uh, standard language as far as the tests go, testing obviously is going to be in standard language . . . You can write our language all you want to, but I also want you to write the language that will be presented on the information on the state test.

Mr. Harrison indicates that institutionalized testing disadvantages students because of few opportunities for students to use AAL, but does not mention that it is necessary for his students to *speak* *SAE to achieve that goal – which is reflected in his assertion that he never modifies his students' spoken language, as displayed in Table 3. The other teachers drew on connections between writing and speaking, believing them to influence one another, with Mr. Jefferson saying his students struggle to not 'write how they speak.' Yet,

by emphasizing that standardized tests would appear in standard language, Mr. Harrison asserts that to be academically successful, students must have a well-established command of writing and reading in *SAE.

While the amount of AAL used and permitted varied by teacher, all maintained that it was important for students to learn and use *SAE in the classroom. Data analysis indicated that the 100% agreement could be explained by a concept that Hoover (1978) previously addressed in her investigations of Black community attitudes toward Black English: insights into a racially, and thereby linguistically, stratified society in the United States.

In six of the seven interviews, teachers offered explicit explanations for why they were committed to their Black students learning *SAE. The seventh teacher offered no explicit reason, but hinted at similar justifications. The teachers expressed concerns about how non-AAL-speaking individuals, particularly White people of a higher socioeconomic status, might negatively perceive their students if they were unable to speak *SAE:

Jefferson: Because as we know, we're always being judged by others – the way that we carry ourselves, the way that we speak . . .

Greene: When you say, 'the others,' who are you referring to? You can be explicit.

Jefferson: I'm talking about Caucasians and . . . well yeah, mainly Caucasians . . . Because in larger society with Caucasians, I have to be mindful of what I'm saying so that I don't come off as threatening or come off as sounding uneducated or ignorant.

Just like Mrs. Ryan's vision of a White college admissions officer, Mr. Jefferson describes a dynamic of social stratification where the opinions of Whites have the ability to impact him and his Black students. The seven teachers expressed a mutual belief that their students would experience discrimination as a result of being Black. Their decisions to encourage their students to use *SAE were bound in personal and professional desires to shield students from experiencing compounded discrimination – racial *and* linguistic. According to the teachers, the manifestation of this linguistic discrimination would take shape through the withholding of opportunities to be academically successful and economically mobile.

Likewise, the teachers feared that the coupled use of AAL and an inability to switch to what is considered *SAE would prevent their students from being hired. All seven teachers voiced that, in order to climb the ladder to financial stability, an expectation for Black people is the ability to use *SAE. Ms. Brown describes the potential for linguistic discrimination by employers of higher socioeconomic status:

No, but it's because when you're outside of [high school], when you're in the job force, and when you're at college or whatever your next level is, the military, there gonna be certain ways that people are expecting them to speak—of course, the nonstandard I do think will impact them negatively, especially with being hired and their employers . . . I'm especially thinking about African Americans who are in a different socioeconomic status and Caucasians.

Each teacher reported feeling responsible for students' ability to obtain high-paying jobs. Emphatic discussion of job interviews and the barriers language use might present came up in every interview. Teachers saw lack of access to *SAE as a lack of access to certain careers, promotions, etc.

I return to Ms. Brown's quote to conclude these findings, because she believed her students spoke *SAE, but that they chose not to use it in the classroom. She expressed valuing her students' use of AAL, but corrected students whenever she perceived their grammar to be incorrect. Her relationship to AAL, like all of the teachers, was complicated and continuously evolving, but her reasoning for asserting that her students speak *SAE was not. She, like the others, saw herself influencing her students far beyond her classroom. Because she teaches Black children whom she loves and recognizes have so much stacked against them, she enforces their use of *SAE with an iron fist. While her methods are no longer in step with the latest research, she does this, not because she despises AAL or Black people, but because she believes *SAE to be a definitive way to give them a fighting chance at stability in a society that would rather see them fail.

Discussion

In the early 20th century, Du Bois asserted that Black students should attend schools 'where children are treated like human beings, trained by teachers of their own race, who know what it means to be black' (1935, 335). Recent research indicates what Du Bois and many others already knew to be true: there are long-run positive impacts of assigning Black children to Black teachers (Gershenson et al. 2017). This study specifically sheds light on the linguistic practices that African American teachers bring to the classroom with their Black students. These data get at some of the specifics of the ways African American teachers think about relating to their Black students with regard to language, clarifying some of the nuance behind the intuition that Black teachers are important to Black students' educational pathways.

I set out to answer the question of why African American teachers who speak AAL might seek to employ or discourage the use of AAL in classrooms. The answer was complex and highlighted how these teacher's decisions about language use were connected to and motivated by their in-group relationships with students and commitment to prepare them for structural racialized inequality. All seven teachers wanted their students to take pride in themselves and where they came from but encouraged their students to use *SAE – believing it to be a deterrent against anti-Black discrimination, particularly with assessments and the workforce. Moreover, these teachers' awareness of their positions as linguistic role models highlighted a linguistic push-pull. Each 'recognize[d] that language is bound up with Black identity and culture', yet stressed the use of *SAE because of 'persistent educational, economic, and social inequality' that make success in White spaces difficult without it (Smitherman 2006, 129). Hence, the ongoing belief that, without acquiring *SAE, their students would struggle to become socioeconomically mobile because of linguistic discrimination.

As indicated by this study's findings, African Americans continue to possess similar fears about raciolinguistic discrimination being directed toward their children, just as they did decades ago (Hoover 1978). The African American teachers of this study use *SAE as a method to combat the violent persistence of anti-Black racism. I point this out

while acknowledging that the use of *SAE will not save the life of a Black child. *SAE would have saved neither Aiyana Stanley-Jones nor Cameron Tillman. No matter how we speak, we still bare our skin (Baker-Bell 2017). However, it is just as important to point out that these teachers did not voice an illusion that *SAE would stop a bullet, just that it would get students a job.

For many, this tactical decision to employ a White cultural linguistic norm is anti-Black and unacceptable. I do not argue that these teachers do not ascribe to respectability language pedagogies (Baker-Bell 2020). However, I also do not disregard the experiences of these African Americans that may have led them to enact classroom practices intended to help students successfully pass state examinations or to protect them from hiring managers who have negative views of those who speak AAL (Henderson 2001). Work by Baugh (2002), as well as Rickford and King (2016), on linguistic profiling further indicate that these African American teachers' fears are not unfounded.

The teachers described AAL as a valuable tool for building rapport and trust, and some explicitly used AAL to encourage students' pride in their Blackness. However, their decisions were ultimately driven by a reality of living in a socially stratified society that remains biased against Black people and, therefore, AAL speakers. It is this racially, economically, and socially stratified society that these teachers are also navigating that is then reflected in their discourses about language, and yet these teachers still strive to affirm and love on these students despite enforcing a linguistic hierarchy.

A shallow reading of these teachers' language ideologies would find their expressed desire to affirm their students to be in direct contradiction with the reproduction of linguistic hierarchies in their classrooms. However, a more discerning read would acknowledge that these teachers are employed in a contradictory profession that positions them as institutional actors purposed with stigmatizing Black students as inherently deviant. And yet, they resist. Not a single teacher reported desiring to eradicate AAL from their students' linguistic repertoire. They resist by personally using language forms that refuse notions that lack nuance by attempting to model for their students strategies for linguistically moving through a world that is lubricated in anti-Blackness at every level. That is a solidarity embedded in love.

How do we reframe the conversation to acknowledge and address the experiences of AAL-speaking teachers that have led to the establishment of these long-held beliefs while working toward the eradication of anti-Black linguistic practices? Historically, African Americans have survived through utilizing subversive tactics to survive in plain sight, and I see that as undergirding these teachers' decisions to use AAL while pushing their students to acquire *SAE. As such, we must question the ways that we move educators toward a system of teaching that allows teachers to provide access to academic, social, and economic mobility under the conditions of a racist-capitalist state, but also moves Black children and their language away from an unattainable form of assimilationism and toward their liberation.

Conclusion

The path forward is complicated. This investigation yields a call for research on the realities of African American teachers standing in the middle of two varieties – one that feels like 'home' and another they see as a mode for survival. What might this

comparative view teach us about language ideologies at work in the considerations teachers negotiate as they work between their appreciation of AAL and the institutional realities of schools that were not built for Black children? How is the privileging of *SAE (as blurry as its boundaries are) related to or grounded in the lived experiences of those who fear linguistic discrimination for students? Meanwhile, we must continue to agitate for more African American teachers, so that all students, but specifically our own, may reap the benefits of learning from them.

While Smitherman (2006) identified African Americans as linguistic role models, my data begin to unveil the *why* behind the language decisions of African American teachers. The field of teacher education must use results like those in this study to re-imagine how to support African American teachers who teach AAL speakers. Baker-Bell's linguistic justice framework for English teacher education (2020) lays out pedagogies that can aid teachers in dismantling anti-Black linguistic racism. In addition to these pedagogies, we also should specifically zero in on the ways that teachers who possess command of AAL can utilize their linguistic skills to develop critical language consciousness in their Black students. This begins by determining the influence of AAL and linguistic role modeling on the long-run positive impacts experienced by Black students with Black teachers.

Finally, this study draws attention to the concept of the 'linguistic role model' by bringing to the forefront how African American teachers are aware of their potential influence on Black students' language. We must further interrogate this self-awareness of linguistic role modeling, particularly if we disagree with their methods or practice, in a way that helps us develop tools which African American teachers can use via their command of AAL to engage, challenge, and offer their students the information needed to liberate themselves from notions that *SAE will save us. In the spirit of 'it ain't ova 'til it's ova,' I encourage others to pick up the mantle.

Notes

1. In instances where I am specifically speaking about people who are the descendants of enslaved Africans brought to the United States, I exclusively use the term African American. In instances where I am speaking of Black people writ large, inclusive of African Americans, I use the term Black.
2. I follow the lead of Lippi-Green (2012) by adding an asterisk to *SAE (54).
3. The names of all information that might lead to the identification of teachers interviewed have been changed to a pseudonym. This includes the names of individuals, schools, school districts, cities, counties, universities, etc.
4. The ways that the students spoke with their teachers was not a focus, but teacher responses to their use were highlighted.
5. I acknowledge coding to be an interpretative act that allows for meaning to be assigned (Saldaña 2015, Chapter 1).
6. Descriptive code definitions: 'The other' included mentions of White people, the middle/upper-class, and/or individuals in positions of power in ways that distance the speaker or their students from those mentioned; 'correction' included discussion, mentions, and instances of modifying students' language; 'mesh' included the (un)mixing of presumed standard and non-standard language – to also include a professed (in)ability to tell the difference between standard and nonstandard; 'negative associations' included expressions that students' language and/or ways of speaking did not fit into the interviewee's mental model of what 'good' or 'proper' English is.

Acknowledgment

Many people have contributed to the development of this article and I am grateful to each person who advised my research, helped me develop an outline, read a draft, or offered constructive critique. Specifically, I would like to thank my qualifying paper committee, Drs. Arnetha Ball, Adam Banks, and Guadalupe Valdés, for guiding this idea in its infancy and vigorously encouraging me to be brave and submit for publication. I extend appreciation to Dr. Sam Wineburg for his structured writing course dedicated to demystifying the journey to publishing, Dr. Jonathan Rosa for his care with helping me move past a large writing block to refine my argument, and Dr. Anne Charity-Hudley for her close-reading and edits of my text. Finally, I offer deep thanks to my colleagues, friends, and family, Daisy Greene, Sandra Habtamu, Alexander Feliciano Mejía, CoCo Massengale, Dr. Melissa Mesinas, and Dr. Amber Jolley-Tagoe, for their incredible, insightful, and continuous feedback given at many different stages of this work.

Disclosure statement

I have no known conflict of interest to disclose.

ORCID

Danielle Marie Greene  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7732-9355>

References

- Alim, H. Sami, John R. Rickford, and Arnetha F. Ball, edited by. 2016. "Introducing Raciolinguistics." In *Raciolinguistics: How Language Shapes Our Ideas about Race*, 1–30. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1983. "Imagined Communities". In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, xi–46. London, UK: Verso.
- Baker-Bell, April. 2017. "'I Can Switch My Language, But I Can't Switch My Skin': What Teachers Must Understand About Linguistic Racism." In *The Guide for White Women Who Teach Black Boys*, edited by E. Moore Jr, A. Michael, and M. W. Penick-Parks, 97–107, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Baker-Bell, April. 2020. "Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity, and Pedagogy." In *NCTE-Routledge Research Series*, edited by V. Kinloch and S. Long. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Baldwin, James. 1979. "If Black English Isn't a Language, Then Tell Me, What Is?" *The New York Times*, 1–4.
- Ball, Arnetha F., and Rashidah J. Muhammad. 2003. "Language Diversity in Teacher Education and in the Classroom." In *Language Diversity in the Classroom: From Intention to Practice*, edited by G. Smitherman and V. Villanueva, 76–88, Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Ball, Arnetha, and Ted Lardner. 1997. "Dispositions toward Language: Teacher Constructs of Knowledge and the Ann Arbor Black English Case." *National Council of Teachers of English* 48 (4): 469–485.
- Baugh, John. 2002. "Linguistic Profiling." In *Black Linguistics*, edited by Arnetha F. Ball, Sinfree Makoni, Geneva Smitherman, and Arthur K. Spears, 155–68. London, UK: Routledge.
- Baugh, J. 2017. "Meaning-Less Differences: Exposing Fallacies and Flaws in "The Word Gap" Hypothesis that Conceal a Dangerous "Language Trap" for Low-Income American Families and Their Children." *International Multilingual Research Journal* 11 (1): 39–51. doi:10.1080/19313152.2016.1258189.
- Blake, Renee, and Cecilia Cutler. 2003. "AAE and Variation in Teachers' Attitudes: A Question of School Philosophy?" *Linguistics and Education* 14 (2): 163–194. doi:10.1016/S0898-5898(03)00034-2.

- Camangian, Patrick R. 2015. "Teach like Lives Depend on It: Agitate, Arouse, and Inspire." *Urban Education* 50 (4): 424–453. doi:10.1177/0042085913514591.
- Champion, Tempii B., Deidre Cobb-Roberts, and Linda Bland-Stewart. 2012. "Future Educators Perceptions of African American English." *Online Journal of Educational Research* 1 (5): 80–89.
- Charity Hudley, Anne H. 2016. "Language and Racialization." In *The Oxford Handbook of Language and Society*, edited by O. Garcia, N. Flores, and M. Spotti, 1–27. Vol. 1. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Common Core Standards Initiative. 2020. "College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language." <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/CCRA/L/>
- Craig, Holly K., Lingling Zhang, Stephanie L. Hensel, and Erin J. Quinn. 2009. "African American English-Speaking Students: An Examination of the Relationship between Dialect Shifting and Reading Outcomes." *Journal of Speech Language and Hearing Research* 52 (4): 839–855. doi:10.1044/1092-4388(2009/08-0056).
- Delpit, Lisa. 1988. "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children." *Harvard Educational Review* 58 (3): 280–299. doi:10.17763/haer.58.3.c43481778r528qw4.
- Denny, Stacy. 2012. "Looking Back while Moving Forward: When Teacher Attitudes Belie Teacher Motive in Bidialectal Classrooms." *International Journal of Learning and Development* 2 (5): 289–306. doi:10.5296/ijld.v2i5.2569.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. 1935. "Does the Negro Need Separate Schools?" *The Journal of Negro Education* 4 (3): 328–335.
- Foster, Michele. 1997. *Black Teachers on Teaching*. New York, NY: New Press.
- Gershenson, Seth, Cassandra M. D. Hart, Constance Lindsay, and Nicholas W. Papageorge. 2017. "The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers." *Institute of Labor Economics*, no. 10630: 1–62.
- Gupta, Abha. 2010. "African-American English: Teacher Beliefs, Teacher Needs and Teacher Preparation Programs." *The Reading Matrix* 10 (2): 152–164.
- Henderson, Anita Louise. 2001. "Is Your Money Where Your Mouth Is? Hiring Managers' Attitudes toward African American Vernacular English." Phd diss., University of Pennsylvania.
- Hooks, Bell. 1994. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Hoover, Mary Rhodes. 1978. "Community Attitudes toward Black English." *Cambridge University Press* 7 (1): 65–87.
- Hsieh, Hsiu-Fang, and Sarah E. Shannon. 2005. "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis." *Qualitative Health Research* 15 (9): 1277–1288. doi:10.1177/1049732305276687.
- Irvine, Judith T, and Susan Gal. 2000. "Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation." In *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*, 35–84. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.
- Johnson, Eric J., Netta Avineri, and David Cassels Johnson. 2017. "Exposing Gaps in/Between Discourses of Linguistic Deficits." *International Multilingual Research Journal* 11 (1): 5–22. doi:10.1080/19313152.2016.1258185.
- Jordan, June. 1988. "Nobody Mean More to Me than You and the Future Life of Willie Jordan." *Harvard Educational Review* 58 (3): 363–375. doi:10.17763/haer.58.3.d171833kp7v732j1.
- Kifano, S., and E. Smith. 2005. "Ebonics and Education in the Context of Culture: Meeting the Language and Cultural Needs of LEP African American Students." In *Ebonics: The Urban Education Debate*, edited by J. D. Ramirez, T. G. Wiley, G. de Klerk, E. Lee, and W. E. Wright, 2nd ed., 62–95. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters .
- King, Sharese. 2020. "From African American Vernacular English to African American Language: Rethinking the Study of Race and Language in African Americans' Speech." *Annual Review of Linguistics* 6: 285–300. doi:10.1146/annurev-linguistics-011619-030556.
- Labov, William. 1972. "The Logic of Nonstandard English." In *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular*, 201–240. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Labov, William, and Bettina Baker. 2015. "African American Vernacular English and Reading". In *The Oxford Handbook of African American Language*, edited by J. Bloomquist, L. J. Green, and S. Laneheart, Vol. 2, 617–636. New York, NY: Oxford Handbooks Online.

- Ladson-Billings, Gloria. 2009. *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. 2nd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lippi-Green, Rosini. 2012. *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology, and Discrimination in the United States*. 2nd ed. London, UK: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Martínez, Ramón. A. 2013. "Reading the World in Spanglish: Hybrid Language Practices and Ideological Contestation in a Sixth-grade English Language Arts Classroom." *Linguistics and Education* 24 (3): 276–288. doi:10.1016/j.linged.2013.03.007.
- McWhorter, John. 1997. "Wasting Energy on an Illusion." *The Black Scholar* 27 (1): 9–14. doi:10.1080/00064246.1997.11430833.
- Moore, Renee. 1996. "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: African Americans and Standard English." Independent Reading Project, Bread Loaf School of English, 1996.
- Mordaunt, Owen G. 2011. "Bidialectalism in the Classroom: The Case of African-American English." *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 24 (1): 77–87. doi:10.1080/07908318.2010.546401.
- Musu-Gillette, Lauren, Cristobal De Brey, Joel McFarland, William Hussar, William Sonnenberg, and Sidney Wilkinson-Flicker. 2017. "Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups 2017." NCES 2017-051. National Center for Education Statistics.
- NCTE. 1974. "Students' Right to Their Own Language: Conference on College Composition and Communication." In *College Composition and Communication: Vol. XXV*. (Issue April).
- Rahman, Jacquelyn. 2008. "Middle-Class African Americans: Reactions and Attitudes toward African American English." *American Speech* 83 (2): 141–176. doi:10.1215/00031283-2008-009.
- Rampton, Ben. 2003. "Hegemony, Social Class and Stylisation." *Pragmatics* 13 (1): 49–83. doi:10.1075/prag.13.1.03ram.
- Rickford, John R. 2006. "African American Vernacular English: Roots and Branches." In *English and Ethnicity*, edited by J. Brutt-Griffler and C. E. Davies, 259–276. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rickford, John R., and Russell J. Rickford. 2000. *Spoken Soul*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
- Rickford, John R., and Sharese King. 2016. "Language and Linguistics on Trial: Hearing Rachel Jeantel (And Other Vernacular Speakers) in the Courtroom and Beyond." *Language* 92 (4): 948–988. doi:10.1353/lan.2016.0078.
- Rosa, Jonathan. 2016. "Racializing Language, Regimenting Latinas/os: Chronotope, Social Tense, and American Raciolinguistic Futures." *Language & Communication* 46: 106–117. doi:10.1016/j.langcom.2015.10.007.
- Rosa, Jonathan, and Nelson Flores. 2015. "Hearing Language Gaps and Reproducing Social Inequality. In "Invited Forum: Bridging the Language Gap." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 25 (1): 77–79.
- Ryan, Ellen Bouchard. 1979. "Why Do Low-prestige Language Varieties Persist?" In *Language and Social Psychology*, edited by H. Giles and R. N. St. Clair, 145–157. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Saldaña, Johnny. 2015. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 1–31. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishing.
- Silverstein, Michael. 1979. "Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology." In *The Elements: Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels*, edited by P. R. Clyne, W. F. Hanks, and C. L. Hofbauer, 193–247. Chicago, IL: Chicago Linguistic Society.
- Sledd, James. 1969. "Bidialectalism: The Linguistics of White Supremacy." *The English Journal* 58: 1307–1329. doi:10.2307/811913.
- Smitherman, Geneva. 1977. *Talkin' and Testifyin': The Language of Black America*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Smitherman, Geneva. 1979. "Toward Educational Linguistics for the First World." *National Council of Teachers of English* 41 (2): 202–211.
- Smitherman, Geneva. 2006. *Word from the Mother: Language and African Americans*, 119–145. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Wei, Li. 2010. "Contact." In *Society and Language Use*, edited by J. Jaspers, J.-O. Östman, and J. Verschueren, 127–139. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Wolfram, Walt. 1969. *A Sociolinguistic Description of Negro Speech*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Wolfram, Walt, and Natalie Schilling-Estes. 1998. *American English: Dialects and Variation*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.